

## CITY OF BALTIMORE

MARTIN O'MALLEY, Mayor



## HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Baltimore City Health Department Honored for Excellence in Public Health

*July 27, 2006* - Today, the Baltimore City Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein is in San Antonio, Texas, to accept a Model Practice Award from the National Association of County and City Health Officials for the Baltimore City Medicare Part D Surveillance and Response Initiative. The initiative was one of 18 programs, selected by a committee of peers, to receive special recognition for programs that demonstrate exemplary and replicable qualities in response to a local public health need.

The Model Practice Award acknowledges the innovative work of the Baltimore City Health Department, in partnership with the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education, during the federally mandated transition to Medicare Part D on January 1, 2006, which abruptly switched or halted health insurance coverage for thousands of vulnerable individuals across the nation. Baltimore City responded with an adaptation of its public health emergency preparedness strategy to ensure that the 28,000 low-income Baltimore City residents automatically transferred from their existing prescription plan to Medicare Part D would continue to receive prescription assistance.

Between January 1, 2006 and June 30, 2006, the Health Department authorized emergency payment of 215 prescriptions (totaling about \$15,000) for 60 patients who would have otherwise gone without medication. To prevent lapses in care, the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education offered counseling and assistance with Medicare enrollment. In addition, the Health Department monitored Emergency Department use among seniors through its existing biosurveillance system for evidence of sudden, reduced access to medications.

"We are proud to receive this Model Practice Award. The award is evidence of our commitment to develop responsive and innovative public health programs that improve the health of our residents," said Mayor Martin O'Malley.

The Baltimore City Medicare Part D Surveillance and Response Initiative is slated to become part of the Association's online, searchable database of successful public health programs in areas ranging from immunization to infectious diseases. The database will allow for sharing of information on what is working across the country in local public health.

A snapshot summary and copy of the Health Department's July 2006 Report on the initiative will be released to the public today.

For more information about the Baltimore City Medicare Part D Surveillance and Response Initiative, go to [www.baltimorecitymedicare.org](http://www.baltimorecitymedicare.org).

For more information about the Baltimore City Health Department, go to <http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/health>.

For more information about the NACCHO Model Practice Awards, go to [www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org).

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